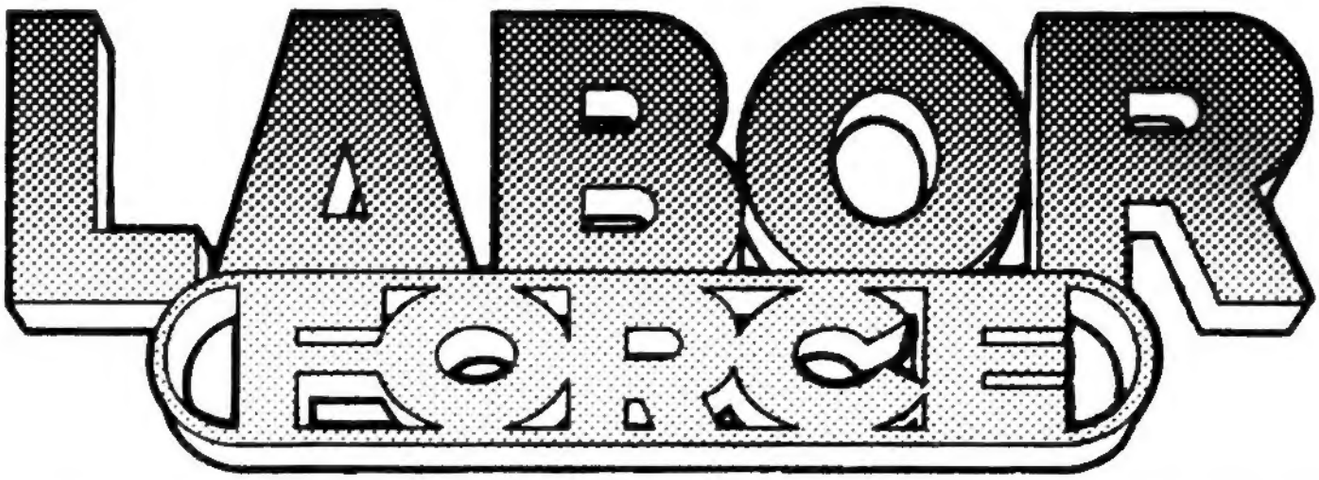
BLACKTHORNE
INCORPORATED
PUBLISHING
No. 2
$1.50 U.S.
$2.25 CANADA
LABOR
FORCE



Hello out there! LABOR FORCE will be coming your way monthly beginning with issue #3, so you won't have to hold your breath as long between issues.

In the meantime, those of you who want to, can follow Kevin's lead and let us know your thoughts on LABOR FORCE.

Write us at:

LABOR FORCE LETTERS
c/o Blackthorne Publishing, Inc.
786 Blackthorne Avenue
El Cajon, California 92020

Dear Editor:

I hold in my hands what might be the most interesting, most original new comic of 1986. The comic I speak of is LABOR FORCE #1, and I think you have a real winner on your hands this time. What makes LABOR FORCE so interesting to me is how logical it is; if a world was populated by superbeings, of course there would be no costumed crimefighters, the cops have the powers (laughing someone to death is really funny) to do the work themselves. I must admit that I found the story a little disturbing, being raised on 60's and 70's comics, seeing super-powered people rent themselves out as flying cabs, fast moving cabs, and window washers. "With great power, comes great responsibility"; I still believe it, but I will admit that your future is more real. I hope LABOR FORCE is a big hit for Blackthorne, I would like to see more quality and original comics like this in the comic market. Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,
Kevin Hall
Castlewood, Virginia

Thanks for the good thoughts Kevin. When we were first approached by Greg Swan, David Ammerman and Jim Pascoe, our immediate thoughts were: "Here's an idea that's clever, well done, and different." We're glad you feel the same way. Keep your eye out for issue #3, where your favorite super-heroes for hire will spend a lot of time on Empyrean.

You'll also learn the origin of Zuzinthal/Outlook. Claire Pyke holds a wake for a member of the LABOR FORCE who has passed on. A TURTLE makes a guest appearance! And we begin a new back-up feature: "Lifestyles of the Super-Normal.

Cliff MacGillivray
Editor

***LABOR FORCE* #2, November 1986.** Published bi-monthly by BLACKTHORNE PUBLISHING, INC., 786 Blackthorne Avenue, El Cajon, California 92020, U.S.A. Telephone (619) 463-9603. *Steven J. Schanes* and *Ann E. Fera*, Publishers. *Cliff MacGillivray*, Editor. *Paul Tallerday*, Production Coordinator. *Lynn Cobb*, Production Manager. *David Johnson*, Production Assistant. *Ann E. Fera*, Circulation Manager. *John Stephenson*, Staff Editor. *Labor Force* ©1986 Labor Force, Inc. This publication may not be reproduced in part or whole without the specific written permission of the publisher and copyright holder(s). No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions with any living or dead names, characters, persons and/or institutions is intended and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Cover art colored by Michael Kelley. First Edition November 1986 *For character licensing contact Steve Schanes.* Printed in the U.S.A.

REZ'S REFUND
OR, EVERYTHING MERGES WITH THE NIGHT.
"DARKNESS NIBBLES AT THE SOUL.
"BIT BY BIT, MORSEL BY MORSEL, IT CONSUMES A MAN'S HEART AND LEAVES HIM HOLLOW...
"... AND ALONE.
"THIS IS A PLACE OF DANGER...
"... AND, AFTER TWENTY YEARS IN THIS PLACE, I HAVE BECOME A LONELY AND DANGEROUS MAN.
"ON THE PLATEAU BELOW, I SEE THE LABOR FORCE.
LABOR FORCE, INC. PRESENTS:
GREG SWAN, WRITER
DAVID AMMERMAN, ARTIST
J.D. PASCOE, EMBELLISHER
JOHN CLARK, LETTERER
CLIFF MacGILLIVRAY, EDITOR
CREATED BY SWAN/AMMERMAN/PASCOE

"LIKE A GREEDY DOG TO ITS DINNER, THEY HAVE COME WHEN I CALLED..."
AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF EMPYREAN'S IMMIGRATION POLICE...
...I PLACE YOU UNDER ARREST.
CALL OFF YOUR POINTY-EARED JACKALS OR I WILL MAKE YOU LAUGH UNTIL YOU DIE... HORRIBLY!
THEY'RE NOT OUR DEMONS!
I ALREADY TOLD HIM THAT, CLAIRE.
NOT... YOURS...
ENOUGH! THIS JUST WON'T DO!

LABOR FORCE, INC. HAS AUTHORIZED ONLY FIVE OPERATIVES FOR THIS MISSION AND WE HAVE SEVEN.
AS MANAGER-IN-CHARGE OF THIS GROUP, THAT PUTS MY REAR IN A SLING!
YOU, MR. IMMIGRATION POLICEMAN, ARE AN UNAUTHORIZED OPERATIVE. YOU GET NO PAY FOR THIS MISSION.
ALSO, I WILL BROOK NO DISOBEDIENCE FROM YOU OR ANY OTHER MEMBER OF THIS TEAM.
NOW, MEET YOUR FELLOW TEAM MEMBERS.
BATTLEBOY, HERE, CAN CRUSH INSIGNIFICANT LITTLE MEN TO A PULP.
DEATH CAN CONTROL THE MINDS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE FORMS.
INTELLIGENCE IS A RELATIVE MEASURE.
...AND WHO IS THIS CLOWNISH CREATURE!
IT'S ME!
DON'T YOU REMEMBER YOUR ACE OPERATIVE?
...THE HANDSOME, THE CHARMING...
...OUTLOOK!
TAKE A GANDER AT MY SNAZZY NEW BACKPACK. IT'S GOT A TWO-WAY C.B. RADIO, IT'S GOT MISSLES, IT TRANSFORMS INTO A BICYCLE...
NO PAY FOR YOU EITHER. YOU RAN OUT JUST BEFORE THIS IMPORTANT MISSION BROKE.
DISCIPLINARY ACTION WILL BE DISCUSSED LATER. FOR NOW, BATTLEBOY TAKES YOUR PLACE.
That's okay, Zuz!-- I'll share my money with you.

Don't worry, mister immigration man. I'll share with YOU, too.
BRIBERY!
NO MORE TALK! YOU MERELY ADD TO YOUR LIST OF OFFENSES!
TH-THAT ROBOT! I DIDN'T NOTICE YOU BEFORE...
IT WAS YOU. YOU K-KILLED MY BROTHER!...
...PLEASE...DON'T HURT ME...

NEXT ORDER OF BUSINESS!
ALL RIGHT!
WHO HIRED THE LABOR FORCE?

WAS IT YOU WITH THE SIZE TWELVE EARS?
FESS UP...

...OR I'LL HAVE CLAIRE, HERE, WARP US OUT OF THE SPACE/TIME STREAM AND BACK TO LABOR FORCE HQ ON EMPYREAN!
I WARN YOU, MISTER...
LANCE!

OUR BILLING DEPARTMENT SUPERVISOR WILL NEED ONE DARN GOOD REASON NOT TO CHARGE YOU FOR THIS FALSE ALARM!

I'VE EASILY INTIMIDATED THEM! NOW, IF ONLY CLAIRE TOOK MY HINT AND BUILT A WARP. WITH LUCK, WE'LL ESCAPE WITHOUT CASUALTIES!
YOU ATTEMPT TO BROWBEAT MY SERVANTS, MR. STICK...
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD ADDRESS THEIR MASTER, INSTEAD!
KORD!

"LIKE A DOG TO ITS DINNER, THEY HAVE COME WHEN I CALLED."
I AM YOUR EMPLOYER.
IS IT REALLY YOU, KORD? YOUR FACE, THE GRAY HAIR--

THE SPACE/TIME STREAM TOYS WITH ITS INHABITANTS, MY DEAR CLAIRE. YOU HAVE BEEN GONE BUT A DAY, YET I HAVE LIVED HERE FOR TWENTY YEARS.
FINDING YOU ALIVE, IT'S--
INCONCEIVABLE? YOU LEFT ME TO DIE...

...WHILE I DEFENDED YOU FROM A SURDU BEAST.

YOU BETRAYED ME--SELFISHLY, THOUGHTLESSLY.

YOU ARE SHIVERING, MR. STICK. DO NOT FEAR. IF ALL GOES WELL, NO ONE DIES TODAY.
HERE IS THE BUSINESS CARD I USED TO SUMMON YOU. NOW YOU WILL SERVE ME.
LABOR FORCE
PRESS BUTTON FOR SERVICE

SELFISH? NO, NOT SELFISH.
EVERYONE DIES, KORD. BUT I AM A TIME TRAVELLER AND TIME IS CRUEL TO THOSE WHO BEND ITS RULES. IT SHOWS ME WHEN MY FRIENDS WILL PASS AWAY. IT SHOWS ME HOW!
I SAW A SAD AND USELESS ENDING FOR YOU. I EXCHANGED IT FOR SOMETHING GLORIOUS.

YOU SEE THE WORLD IN A DREAM, CLAIRE PYKE.
I HAVE REACHED MY DECISION. BECAUSE I ONCE LOVED YOU, I WILL NOT KILL YOU NOW.

I ACT FOR REZ, INC., A MARKETING FIRM. THEY HAVE SOLD A DISTRIBUTORSHIP TO THE PLANET FILFOT. THE FILFOTIANS WANT A REFUND.
YOU WILL PREVENT THEM FROM RECEIVING IT.
WHY DO THE FILFOTIANS DEMAND A REFUND?
IMBECILE!
I CARE LITTLE ABOUT OUR CUSTOMERS AND THEIR MOTIVATIONS. I SIMPLY ENFORCE COMPANY POLICY...
... WITHOUT EXCEPTION!
SATISFY YOUR CURIOSITY WITH THIS MARKETING BROCHURE-- OR NOT AT ALL!
REZ Prospectus
LEMME SEE TOO!
ACCORDING TO STANDARD CONTRACT, REFUNDS MAY BE CLAIMED WITHIN THREE DAYS OF SALE.
YOU MUST CONVINCE THE FILFOTIONS TO ABANDON THEIR QUEST OR DELAY THEM PAST THE THREE-DAY RECISION PERIOD.
THIS IS NOTHING MORE THAN A PYRAMID MARKETING SCHEME.
PYRAMID MARKETING PLANS ARE PERFECTLY LEGAL, DEATH.
WHILE I APPRECIATE YOUR ANALYSIS, I SEE NO PROBLEM WITH ACCEPTING KORD'S GENEROUS OFFER.
BY THE WAY, UH, KORD, DID MY SECRETARY AT LABOR FORCE HQ DISCUSS COMPENSATION WITH YOU?
JEWELS, ONE BAG.
DON'T GET MAD AT ME, MR. STICK, BUT ISN'T PYRAMID MARKETING A LOT LIKE CHAIN LETTERS? MAYBE MR. KORD CHEATED THE FILFOTIANS?
GROW UP, BATTLEBOY. THIS IS THE BUSINESS WORLD. LET ME HANDLE THINGS.
DAMN ZOMBIE. DAMN KID. IF THEY MAKE KORD ANGRY...

...HE'LL KILL US ALL!
IT WILL BE A PLEASURE WORKING WITH YOU, KORD!
I AM GLAD FOR YOU.
OUR PRESIDENT INSISTED I HIRE YOU.
PERHAPS HE PREFERS YOUR BRAND OF SUBTERFUGE AND TRICKERY TO MY MORE... STRAIGHTFORWARD... METHODS.
I'M AN OFFICIAL FROM THE WORLD OF EMPYREAN.
I REFUSE TO TAKE PART IN THIS FARCE!
AS YOU...
NO!
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT!
MY HUSBAND!
SEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTION!
PLEASE DON'T KILL MY DADDY!
...WISH!
SNAP

AAAHEEE!
HIS MIND--SO STUBBORN, SO POWERFUL. THE DEMONS--SO MANY.
I'VE FAILED... AND SO WOULD THE OTHERS.
I SPEAK FOR US ALL. WE ARE TRULY ANXIOUS TO BEGIN OUR WORK.
I WASTE MY TIME.
HERE IS A MAP OF THE REZ, INC. FACILITIES. THE FILFOTIANS ARE OVER THAT RISE.
IF YOU FAIL, WE WILL MEET AGAIN...
SOON...
A WIZARD, A WARRIOR AND AN ELF! LANCE, LADY LUCK IS ON OUR SIDE... THE FILFOTIANS ARE A QUEST GROUP!
THESE GUYS ENJOY OVERCOMING IMPOSSIBLE OBSTACLES!
THEY'D BE DOWNRIGHT DISAPPOINTED IF THEY COULD JUST WALK UP TO A COUNTER AND ASK FOR THEIR REFUND!
DELAYING THEM FOR THREE DAYS'LL BE A BREEZE!
A GOOD MANAGER IS ALSO A GOOD LISTENER. EXPLAIN YOUR PLAN IMMEDIATELY.
WE'LL LURE THEM TO THIS SALES MEETING HALL. PERHAPS THE SALESMEN THERE WILL CONVINCE THEM TO HONOR THEIR CONTRACT.
THEN...

LATER...
PSST! CLAIRE, ARE YOU SURE THIS WILL WORK?
TRUST ME, BOSS.
I AM THE WISE AND ALL-POWERFUL MENTOR...
?AHEM?
DEMONS!
GET YERSELVES BACK! I'LL MAKE 'EM EAT COLD STEEL!
FWOOSH!
SPUTTER!
YOU PAY GOOD MONEY FOR A ROCKET PACK AND WHATTA THEY ASK YA TO DO WITH IT?
BLOW SMOKE!
POP!

MY SOURCES INDICATE YOU WISH TO VOID A CONTRACT!
HE MEANS, WHILE JOURNEYING IN THE REALM OF SPIRITS, YOUR NOBLE QUEST FOR A REFUND BECAME KNOWN UNTO US--
AN ORACLE! AH DON'T TRUST 'IM!
HOW 'BOUT CHOO, HOWARD?
→Cough←
BLOODY 'ELL, BILLY-BOB, WHY YER ASTIN' ME? I WASH DISHES FOR ME LIVIN'.
THIS QUEST WERE KYNXYX' BLOODY IDEE, ANYWHY. WHYNT-CHOO AST 'IM?
THY TIMING WATH MOHTHT OPPORTUNE, GREAT MENTOR!
IT WATH BUT EARLIER TODAY THAT BILLY-BOB TRADED THE HEART OF DARKNETH FOR A REZ, INC. DITHTRIBUTORTHIP!
NOW, OUR ENTIRE PLANET ITH IN JEOPARDY! BUT LET ME EKTHPLAIN...

"OUR GLORIOTH WORLD OF FILFOT ITH BETHET BY AN EVIL THORTHEROR!
"E'EN NOW, HE THWALLOWTH OUR WORLD IN ETERNAL BLACKNETH!
"WE HAVE BUT ONE FLEETING HOPE--
"HITH POWER ITH DRAWN FROM A DREAD JEWEL-- THE HEART OF DARKNETH! OUR QUETHT ITH TO RECOVER IT...
". . AND DETHTROY IT!"
AN' WE COULD DO IT, IF IT WEREN'T FER BILLY-BOB 'ERE AN'S RUDDY GET-RICH-QUICK SCHEMES.
THET JEST AIN'T FAIR, HOWARD, AND YEW KNOWS IT. THAT THAR SALESMAN FELLA SAID IT WAS A SHORE THANG!
ENOUGH!
WHAT WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PAY TO RECOVER THE HEART?
TWO BAGTH OF JEWELTH!
LANCE! WE'RE WORKING FOR KORD!
OOOH!
A MAN SERVES MANY MASTERS, CLAIRE.
I ACCEPT YOUR HUMBLE OFFERING AND CONSENT TO AID YOU IN DESTROYING THE HEART OF DARKNESS.
FIRST, A GIFT.
I LOAN YOU MY TRUSTED HALFLING MANSERVANT...
ROBO!
HI!

BLIMEY! 'AT'S AN 'ALFLING? 'E LOOKS MORE LIKE SOMETHING WOT BIN SCRAPED OFFA PLATE.
AHEM! GENTLEMEN! YOUR JEWEL IS HELD IN A...er, MAGIC CASTLE. TO ENTER, YOU REQUIRE THE STONE OF BELTHOS!
AH-HA!
I JUTHT KNEW WE'D NEED A MYTHTIC TALITHMAN!
THIS QUEST BE NOT FOR THE FAINT-OF-HEART! THE STONE IS NEAR A... TEMPLE GUARDED BY A HOARD OF... FANATIC WORSHIPPERS!
YAHOO! I WUZ WONDERIN' WHEN WE'D GIT 'ROUND TO SUM HACKIN' AN' SLASHIN'. LEAVE THEM WORSHIPPERS TUH ME!
THIS ANCIENT MAP WILL GUIDE YOU. THE TEMPLE IS HERE.
YUH MEAN WHERE IT SAYS "SALES MEETIN' HALL?" THET'S A FUR PIECE AWAY! WE AIN'T GOT BUT THREE DAYS TUH CLAIM OUR REFUND!
IT IS THE ONLY WAY.
YOUR AUDIENCE IS ENDED. NOW, BEGONE!
HE MEANS... AND NOW, WE GO!
HKOFFE THURELY, A MIRACLE HATH HKOFFE COME TO PATH!
THE GODTH HATH THENT AN ORACLE TO UTH IN OUR TIME OF NEED!
TAKE HEART MY INTREPID COMPANIONTH...
THE CB RADIO CONNECTION WITH ROBO WORKS AS I PREDICTED.
...WITH THE WITHDOM OF THE ORACLE TO LIGHT OUR WAY...
PERHAPS DIOGENES' LANTERN WOULD PROVIDE SUPERIOR ILLUMINATION.
...OUR QUETHT CAN NAUGHT BUT PREVAIL!

SOON...
WELCOME SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS!
NO LOSERS BEYOND THIS POINT!
TODAY'S SEMINAR WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE!
NEVER SEEN THE LIKE! 'AD TA PAY ADMISSION TA THIS BLEEDIN' TEMPLE!
CAIN'T SHAKE THUH NOTION AH BIN HERE 'AFORE...
NOW, HERE'S THE MAN YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR-- TOMMMM-- NORMANNNNN!!
REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU WHEN YOU JOINED REZ, INC.?!
I SAID, 'SUCCESS COMES IN CANS, NOT CANNOTS!'
RICH AND THIN!
YOU BELIEVED ME. YOU ACTED. TODAY, MOST OF YOU ARE MILLIONAIRES!
YOU WUZ RIGHT, TOM!
ME MADE MORE MONEY THAN ME CAN COUNT!
TODAY'S TOPIC IS, 'RID YOURSELF OF DOUBT-- OR SHOULD YOU?'
TARNATION! I SHORE 'NOUGH BIN HERE 'AFORE! THIS'S WHAR AH BOUGHT ME THUH DISTRIBUTORSHIP! AND THAT THAR SNAKE'S THUH ONE WHUT SOLD IT TUH ME!
REZ INC. MEANS:
DON'T
THET ORACLE DONE FIBBED! THIS AIN'T NO TEMPLE!
WHO ARE WE TO QUETHTION AN ORACLE? THURELY, WE ARE AS WORMTH BENEATH HITH FEET! WITHOUT DOUBT, HE MEANT "TEMPLE" IN ONLY A THYMBOLIC THENTH!
AYN'T NO BLEEDIN' STONE 'A BELTHOS 'ERE, EYETHER. WAS 'E SYMBOLIZIN' THAT, TOO?
JEST GO ON WAGGIN' YER JAWBONES. I GOT ME SOME BIZNESS NEEDS TAKIN' CARE OF!
THET SALESMAN FELLER BEST CIRCLE TH' WAGONS...
'CUZ HIM'N ME'RE GONNA PALAVER!

AH! I SEE WE HAVE SOME NEW CUSTOMERS IN THE AUDIENCE! AND WHAT A MOTIVATED GROUP THEY ARE!
SORRY TO DAMPEN SUCH REMARKABLE ENTHUSIASM, SIR, BUT THIS IS THE ADVANCED SEMINAR! THE BEGINNER'S SEMINAR STARTS IN ONLY AN HOUR...
I CAN ASSURE YOU YOUR PATIENCE WOULD BE HANDSOMELY REWAR--
EEP!
WE WANTS A REFUND...
NOW!
THAT'S NOT A VERY POSITIVE ATTITUDE, SIR...
THE REZ, INC. SALES PROGRAM IS SECOND TO NONE AND--HEY! I CAN'T BREATHE!
KEEP VER CHIN UP, PAHDNER! AH'M GONNA GIVE YUH PURT' NEAR THREE MORE MINUTES TUH LIVE!
SO MUCH FOR THE SALESMAN CHANGING THEIR MINDS ABOUT THE REFUND. YOU PEOPLE NEED TO FIND A STONE OF BELTHOS--FAST!
IT...IT'S MISSING A CERTAIN SOMETHING. A STONE OF BELTHOS, WELL, IT'S GOT TO HAVE SOME DRAMA... SOME... PANACHÉ... SOME...
HOW'S THIS?

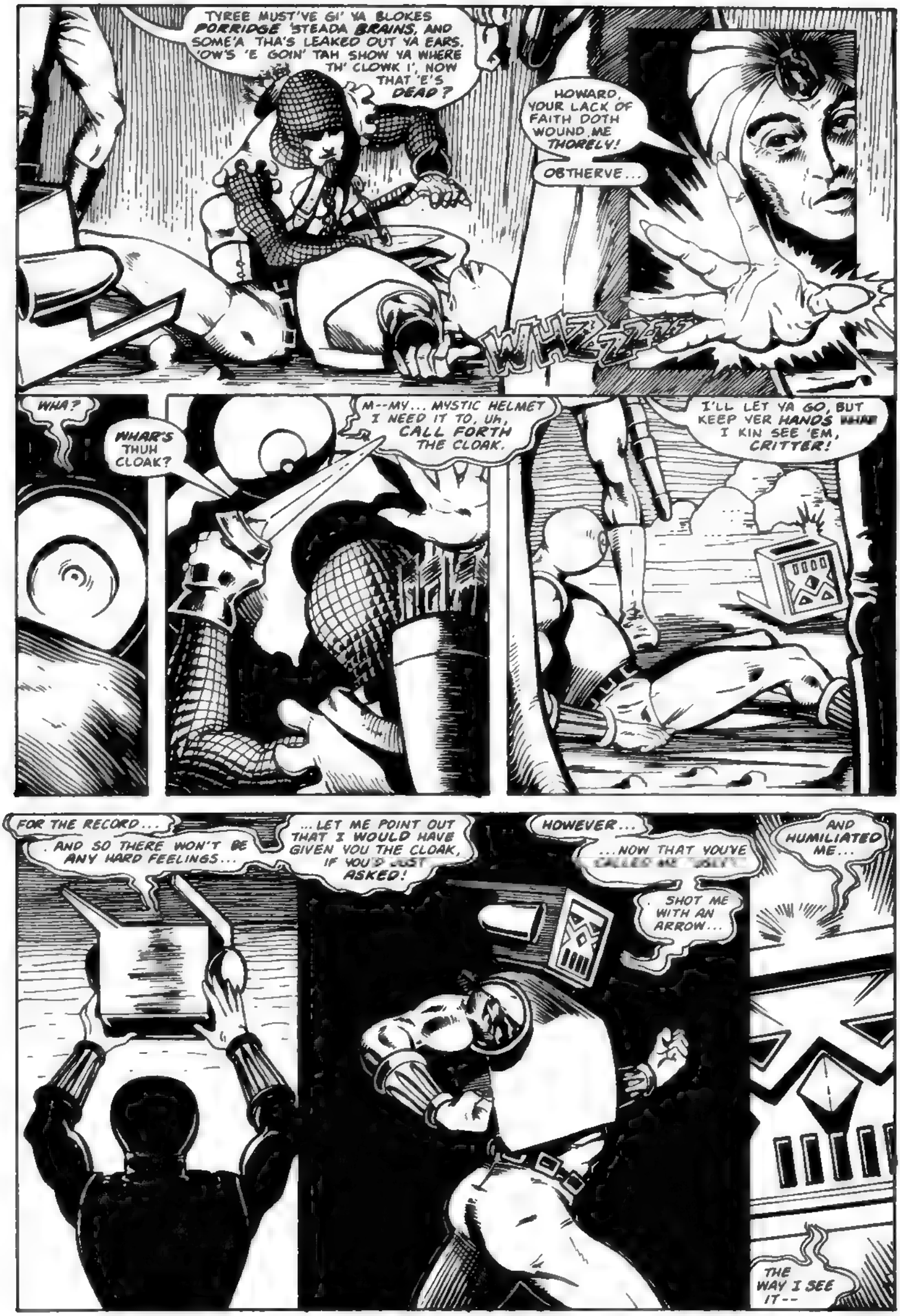
RRUUMBLL
HOW'S THIS?
IMPRESSIVE!
BUT, HOW'RE THEY GOING TO CARRY IT ANYWHERE?
HMMPHE
EXCELL-ENT POINT, CLAIRE.
BATTLEBOY, PUT THE STONE OF BELTHOS DOWN IMMEDIATELY AND GO GET THE FILFOTIANS.
DON'T FORGET TO ASK THEM FOR ANOTHER BAG OF JEWELS YOU KNOW HOW WE WORK BY NOW.
YO!
GREED IN THE FACE OF ALL ODDS!
KA-BOOM!

MEANWHILE...
THE PRESIDENT CAN GIVE REFUNDS, BUT MY HANDS ARE TIED! COMPANY POLICY!
TELL YUH WHUT. GONNA FIND ME A HANGIN' TREE AN' TIE A ROPE 'ROUND YUR PENCIL NECK! IT'S MUH POLICY!
HEY, ROBO!
WHY?
Look, guys, a street urchin has Mysteriously appeared!
URCHIN?
ANYONE LOOKIN' FOR A STONE OF BELTHOS?
THEN FOLLOW ME!
PHEW
I-- I'M ALIVE!
NO THANKS TO YOU LOSERS IN THE AUDIENCE!
YOU PEOPLE DEAF? I SAID "HIDE, THEY'RE COMING!"
HEY--!
THIS'S IT! NOW, GIMME THE JEWELS!
'OO'S GONNA CARRY I'?
I HAVE TAKEN A VOW AGAINTHT PHYTHICAL LABOR!
CAIN'T FIGHT WITH MUH HANDS FULL!
BLOODY 'ELL--

Mr. EIF!
DAMN ROBO! DOES HE ALWAYS HAVE TO BE SUCH A BOY SCOUT?
Thanks, Howard.
PLEASURE'S MOIN, 'ALFLING
Let me help! Pretty Please?
With sugar and a cherry on top?
IT'S THE FIRST LAW OF ROBOTICS, LANCE! YOU KNOW-- A ROBOT WILL BE TRUSTWORTHY, LOYAL, HELPFUL, FRIENDLY--
STOP PRATTLING, CLAIRE! WE'VE GOT TO SEND THEM ON ANOTHER GOOSE CHASE.
IS MY SKOFF BEARD ON STRAIGHT?
WAHL LOOKY HERE! THUH BOZO'S BACK!
THE SPIRITS ARE PLEASED WITH YOUR SUCCESS! I HAVE BEEN SENT TO TELL YOU OF YOUR NEXT OBSTACLE! YOU MUST OBTAIN A, er, CLOAK OF INVISIBILITY!
YUH SHOOIN' STRAIGHT OR YUH MEAN THET SYMBOLICALLY?
YOU DARE QUESTION THE GREAT MENTOR?! IGNORE THIS CHATTERING WORM, GREAT ONE! HE KNOWS NOT WHAT HE DOES!
MY MASTER REQUIRES THE MYSTIC MAP. RETURN IT, CRETIN!

IT BE GUARDED, Er, BY A HIDEOUS ONE-EYED BEHEMOTH!
A BEHEMOTH? BUT HOW ITH SUCH A BEATHT DEFEATED?
I HAVE SPOKEN--AND NEED SPEAK NO MORE!
Er...
NOW, ATTEND MY WORDS--
YOU, Uh, "CHATTERING WORMS" ARE WISE TO OBEY ME WITHOUT QUESTION!
THE CLOAK IS LOCATED HERE. HOWEVER--
THE GREAT ONE HATH TWPOKEN!
THE JOURNEY'LL TAKE US TWO DIES, MATE! AN' WE AIN'T GAH BUT TWO DIES LEF' TA CLAIM TH' REFUN'.
NEVERTHELETH, WE MUST FORGE ONWARD!
...FOR PERSONAL GLORY!
FERGOT TO AST 'IM ONE THING, KYNYX!
Eh?
SETTIN' GLORY ASIDE F' AH SECON'...
WE BEGONE!
FOR GLORIOTH FILFOT, AND...
...WHA' D' WE NEED A RUDDY CLOWK O' INVISIBILITY FOR, ANYWHY?
OUTLOOK--
YEAH, I KNOW...
I'M THE ONLY FOOL 'ROUND HERE WHO EVEN REMOTELY QUALIFIES AS A ONE-EYED BEHEMOTH.
JUST WISH YAH HADN'T LIED TO 'EM.
THEY'RE GONNA BE LOOKIN' FOR A HIDEOUS ONE-EYED BEHEMOTH...
...AND FIND ME INSTEAD!

A DAY, AND A LONG JOURNEY LATER...
Are we there yet?
TYREE! PUT THE THTONE DOWN QUIETLY, 'HALFLING.
BIT O' A RUNT FOR A BEHEMOTH, 'E IS.
UGLY CUSS, TOO-- JEST LAK THET ORACLE SAYED.
'BOUT TIME THOSE RASCALS REACHED THE RIDGE! C'MON DOWN, BOYS. AND LET'S GET THIS TOMFOOLERY OVER WITH!
LET'S SEE IF'N AN ARRAH DON'T MAKE SHORT WORK UH THET CRITTER.
EEEEEEYAAAGHH!
DON'T YOU CLODS KNOW HOW TO ASK NICELY WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING?
THENK AH RILED HIM
YOU FELLAS BEST START WRITIN' YOUR WILLS IN SHORTHAND, 'CAUSE YOU AIN'T GOT LONG TO--
WHA?!
BEHOLD, FOUL BEATHT, THE PINWHEEL OF FAMAMOTH!
KINDA PRETTY AND SPARKLY...
.. AND WHIRLY AND TWIRLY AND..
ZZzzzzzz..


TYREE MUST'VE GI' YA BLOKES PORRIDGE 'STEADA BRAINS, AND SOME'A THA'S LEAKED OUT YA EARS. 'OW'S 'E GOIN' TAH SHOW YA WHERE TH' CLOWK I', NOW THAT 'E'S DEAD?
HOWARD, YOUR LACK OF FAITH DOTH WOUND ME THORELY!
OBTHERVE...
WHZZZ!!!
WHA?
WHAR'S THUH CLOAK?
M--MY... MYSTIC HELMET I NEED IT TO, Uh, CALL FORTH THE CLOAK.
I'LL LET YA GO, BUT KEEP VER HANDS WHAR I KIN SEE 'EM, CRITTER!
FOR THE RECORD...
. AND SO THERE WON'T BE ANY HARD FEELINGS...
...LET ME POINT OUT THAT I WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU THE CLOAK, IF YOU'D JUST ASKED!
HOWEVER...
...NOW THAT YOUVE CALLED ME SOLLY
. SHOT ME WITH AN ARROW...
AND HUMILIATED ME...
THE WAY I SEE IT--

IT'S MY TURN!
SH-BOOM!
BLOODY 'ELL!
NO FAIR! YOU WUZ S'POSED TO BE SUMMONIN' THUH CLOA-A-A-A-AAAARRRGGHHHHH!!
GOT SIDETRACKED!
HMM... "MAGIC MISSILES (SEE MISSILES, MAGIC--VOLUME II, PAGE 418)"
GULP!
YEEOW! WHY'D I START THIS RUCKUS WITH AN ARROW IN MY SHOULDER? FOOL!
GOTTA PULL IT OUT!

YUH KNOW WHUT'S WRONG WITH YUH, BEHEMOTH?
YUH GOT NO SENSE UH FAIR PLAY!
KLANG!
TARNATION!
ROBO'S JUST SITTIN' THERE, GRINNIN'! DIDN'T LIFT A HAND TO HELP ME!
GUESS IT SERVES ME RIGHT, AFTER WHAT I DID TO HIM ON EMPYREAN!
Mr. Stick told me, "good robots don't blow their cover." Robo is a GOOD robot! Zuzi must be REAL proud of me!
YOU FELLAS SURE WORKED UP A SWEAT. ANYONE ELSE CARE FOR A COLD ONE?
#@~.%●~!!
AND NOW THE THING YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR--
THE CLOAK!
DON'T SEE IT, GUV.
SILLY ELF. YOU CAN'T SEE CLOAKS OF INVISIBILITY...
THEY'RE INVISIBLE!
BLOODY 'ELL.

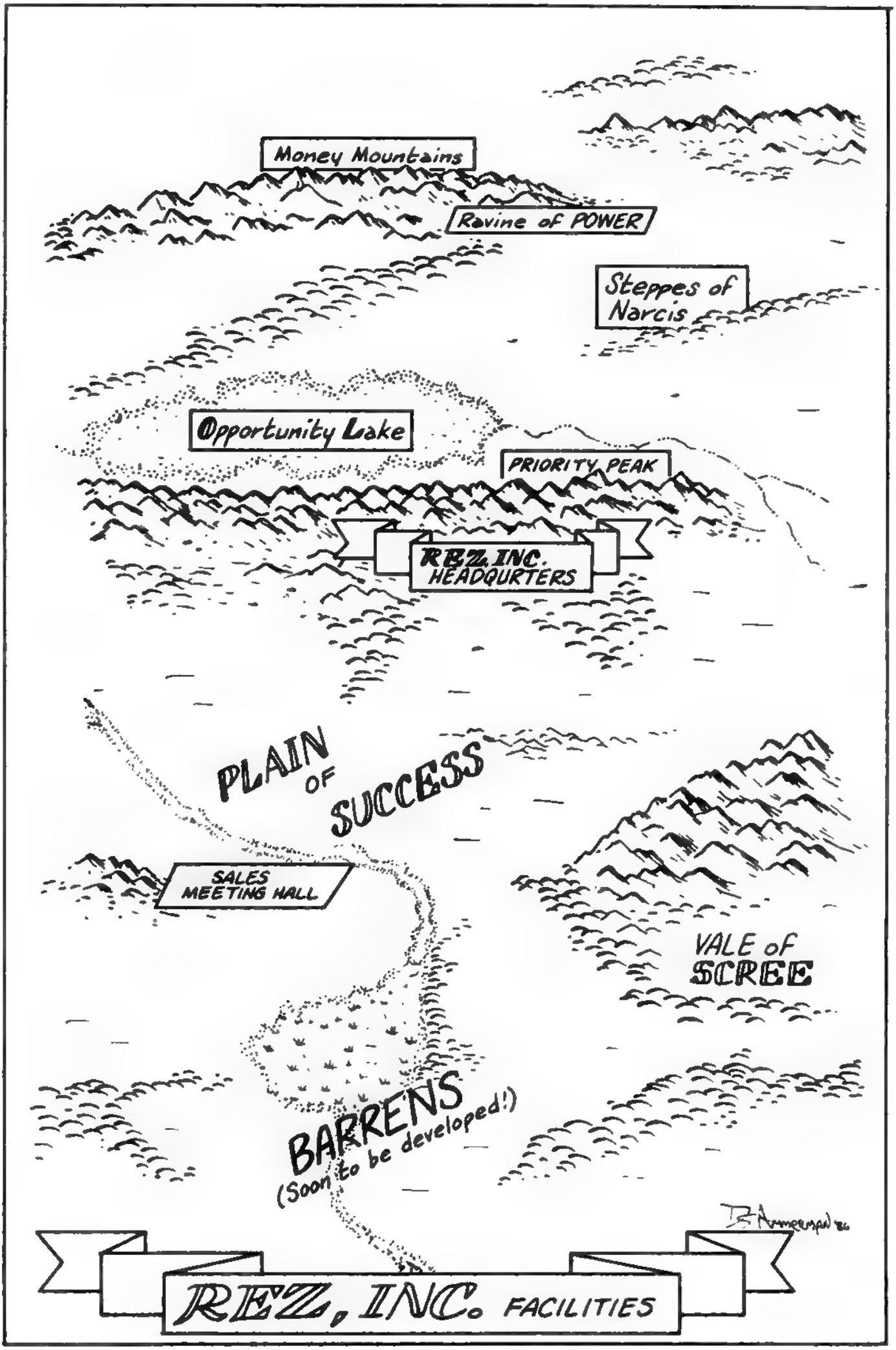
A DAY LATER...
"NEVER SAW LANCE STICK SO HAPPY. SAID I'D BE HIS MOST FEARSOME AND UNSTOPPABLE OBSTACLE YET.
"WITH YOU STANDING GUARD, THE FILFOTIANS DON'T STAND A CHANCE! MONEY'S IN THE BAG!"
"I HESITATED.
"IT'S THE WAY WE MAKE OUR LIVING!" HE YELLED.
"I AGREED TO IT.
"MY PAST STRETCHES ENDLESSLY BEHIND ME AND SOMETIMES, IT SEEMS, I REMEMBER TOO MUCH.
"LIKE LUCKY STRIKE... AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT SHE CALLED HERSELF. AN ASSASSIN. A SUPER-VILLAIN. LIKE ANY OF A THOUSAND OTHERS I'VE DEFEATED.
"KILLED A 'TARGET' WHO'D HOLED UP IN A TENEMENT DOWNTOWN. DESTROYED HIM WITH HER HEAT VISION.
"ALONG WITH THE TENEMENT.
"ALONG WITH FOURTEEN FAMILIES WHO WERE UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE HOME THAT NIGHT.
"AT THE TRIAL, SHE PLED INNOCENCE. SAID SHE WAS HIRED TO DO IT.
"DOING BAD THINGS WAS HER LIVING. SEEMS NOW IT WILL BE MINE.
"SOMETIMES I REMEMBER TOO MUCH.
IT'S THE CASTLE, SHORE 'NOUGH. BUT THET DOORMAN... GOT ME A BAD FEELIN' 'BOUT THIS. AN' WE'S ALMOST OUT OF TIME!
GOOD THIR! WE BEAR THE THTONE OF BELTHOTH! LET UTH PATH!
PASS FREELY AND OBTAIN YOUR REFUND.
"AND SOMETIMES... I REMEMBER... ENOUGH."
DEATH! YOU FOOL!

YOU AGREED TO DELAY THEM AT THE DOOR.
I REMEMBERED. I RECONSIDERED.
I'M THE MANAGER HERE. I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING! YOU OBEY ME!
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU'VE RUINED IT FOR EVERYONE!
HE BE THTRANGELY THAVEN. YET YOU ARE CORRECT, FRIEND BILLY-BOB; IT BE THE ORACLE!
GREAT ONE! YOU HAVE RETURNED TO THARE IN THITH-- OUR MOMENT OF TRIUMPH!
OUR QUETHT BE NOW COMPLET
TOO LATE! THREE MINUTES TOO LATE!
CREAAAAKKKK!
CREAK
DON'T JUST STAND THERE, MY GOOD PEOPLE! COME ON IN!
IT--IT'S THE SURDU BEAST!
CALL ME REZ. I'M THE PRESIDENT HERE!
I REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT, IF YOU WANT A REFUND, THE THREE-DAY RE-CISSION PERIOD HAS PASSED.
AND THAT MEANS...

A SALE IS A SALE.
BILLY-BOB, HOWARD AND KYNVX--WELCOME ABOARD!
I'VE GOT THE HEART OF DARKNESS AND YOU ARE NOW THE EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTORS OF REZ, INC. PRODUCTS TO THE PLANET FILFOT.
THIS IS SOMETHING OF A RED LETTER DAY FOR ME. WITH FILFOT UNDER MY ECONOMIC CONTROL, I NOW RULE THE UNIVERSE!
MY GOALS:
IT'S ALL PART OF BEING SUCCESS ORIENTED.
YOU WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS.
YOU PRIORITIZE THEM. SAY THEM ALOUD TO YOURSELF...
...AND YOU CAN'T HELP BUT BE SUCCESSFUL! OF COURSE, PYRAMID MARKETING HELPS...
...AND SO DOES BEING POWERFUL ENOUGH TO RAVAGE WORLDS!
WHAT D'YA SAY, LITTLE GUY? IT'S BEST TO START ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG!
Y'KNOW, YOU REALLY THREW ME FOR A LOOP WHEN WE LAST MET--TWENTY YEARS AGO. YA GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE SUCCESSFUL!
HEY! LEAVE MY HAIR ALONE!
I TOLD YOU SURDUS WERE INTELLIGENT!
I WANT TO KNOW HOW IT IS THAT YOU RULE THE UNIVERSE? THIS IS THE FIRST I'VE HEARD OF IT!
I ONLY RULE THE UNIVERSE IN CERTAIN TIME PERIODS, FOR INSTANCE, I RULE EMPYREAN... BUT IT'S ABOUT TWO YEARS IN YOUR FUTURE!
BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT. NOW THAT I'VE MET ALL MY GOALS, THE QUESTION REALLY IS--WHAT DO I DO NEXT?
AND, WITH THAT, YOU'VE HELPED IMMENSELY, CLAIRE PYKE! AS YOU'VE REMINDED ME, I ONLY RULE THE UNIVERSE IN CERTAIN TIME PERIODS!
SO MY NEXT OBJECTIVE IS OBVIOUS--
I'LL RULE ALL OF TIME!
SAY, I WONDER IF ANYONE'S EVER THOUGHT OF THAT BEFORE?

AHEM
DON'T MEAN TO INTERRUPT, REZ, BUT WE HAD A CONTRACT. WE'VE FULFILLED IT.
AH, YES, MR. STICK. ALWAYS LOOKING AT THE BOTTOM LINE.
HELP YOURSELF TO ANY OF THESE JEWELS.
BUT PLEASE LIMIT YOURSELF TO ONE BAG. ONLY.
NOW, EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT WHILE I CALL FOR SOME HORS D'OEUVRES!
IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE!
CLAIRE, GET THE JEWELS...
...AND BUILD A SPACE/TIME WARP ASAP!
WHEN REZ RETURNS...
WHAT? LEAVING SO SOON?
LIKE I ALWAYS SAY... TIME IS MONEY!
AND SO YOU DO.
IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE DOING BUSINESS WITH YOU.
DON'T BE A STRANGER!
BELIEVE ME REZ, THE PLEASURE'S MINE!
WELL BOYS, HAVE SOME HORS DOEUVRES!
--AND WHAT SAY WE DISCUSS THE HEART OF DARKNESS, SAVING YOUR PLANET FROM ETERNAL DARKNESS...
AND WHAT YOU WILL DO FOR ME IN RETURN!
'E'S GOT US BY THE SHORT'N CURLIES - MATES!
NO HE AIN'T. THET STICK HOMBRE DONE TOOK THE HEART!

HE WHAT?
PARDON THE DELAY IN NEGOTIATIONS, GENTLEMEN!
KORD, BE A TROOPER, WOULD YOU? TAKE A FEW DEMONS AND GO GET THE HEART BACK FROM THAT CLEVER MR. STICK!
DONE.
AND AFTER THE JEWEL IS RECOVERED? WHAT WILL BE THE FATE OF THE LABOR FORCE?
OH... I DON'T KNOW.
BE CREATIVE.
EMPYREAN. THE OTHER END OF THE SPACE/TIME WARP.
LANCE, YOU CHEATED THOSE FILFOTIANS!
THEY PAID YOU TO HELP THEM GET THEIR JEWEL BACK.
BUT YOU LEFT THEM AND THE JEWEL IN THE CLUTCHES OF THAT DISGUSTING REZ!
EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS ARE FOUNDED ON TRUST, CLAIRE...
... AS ARE BUSINESS AGREEMENTS.
I AGREED TO DESTROY THIS JEWEL...
NOT RETURN IT TO THEM!
ZZZAAPP!!
Did I do okay?
END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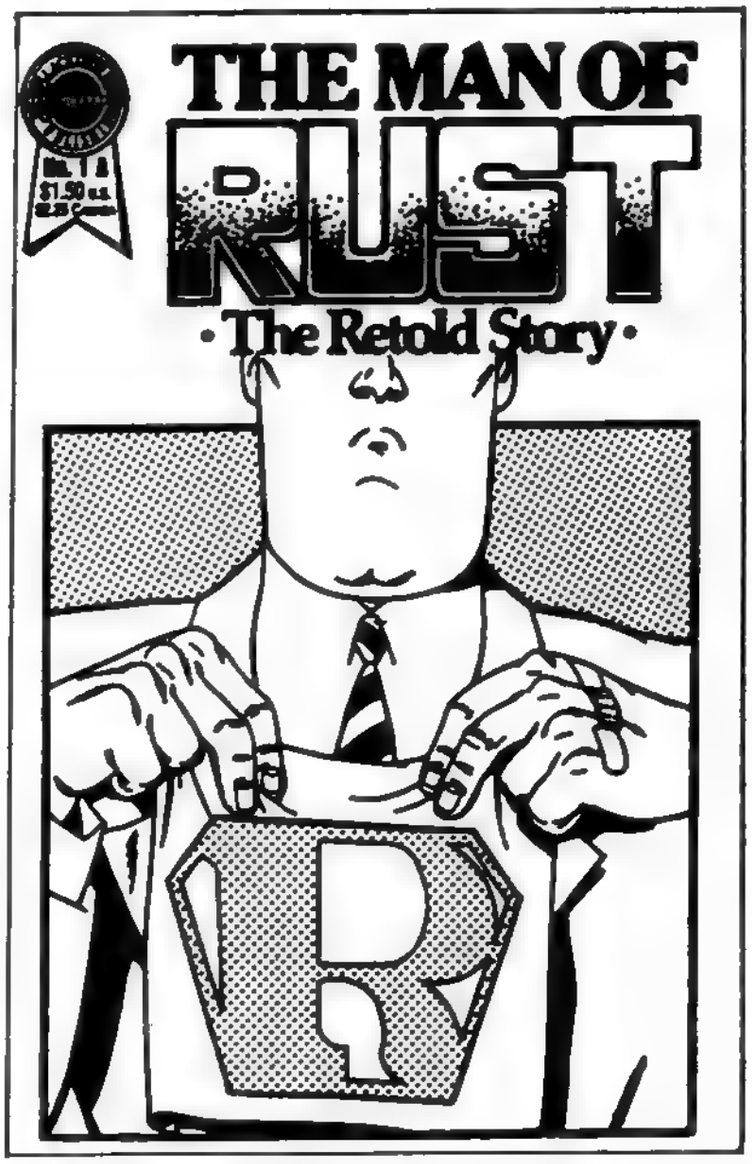

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